WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1   1. A method for invoking an application to process a multimedia resource

2   specified by a Uniform Resource Locator (URL), the method comprising:

3   mapping a set of keys on a user device to a set of URLs;

4   detecting activation of a particular mapped key;

5   retrieving a URL associated with the activated mapped key; and

6   invoking an application to process the media resource specified by the

7   retrieved URL.

1   2. The method of claim 1, wherein the retrieved URL is a resource on a

2   server designated to process requests generated in response to activation of any one of the

3   mapped keys.

1   3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   accessing a particular Web page having a link for a setup program;

3   downloading the setup program onto the user device; and

4   executing the setup program to assist with the mapping of the set of keys.

1   4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   obtaining demographic data for a user of the user device.

1   5. The method of claim 4, further comprising:

2   generating a unique identification code for the user.

1   6. The method of claim 5, wherein the unique identification code is

2   generated based on the supplied demographic data for the user.

1   7. The method of claim 6, wherein the unique identification code is

2   further generated based on a pseudo-random number.

1   8. The method of claim 5, wherein the directing the Web page includes

2   generating an application invocation request, using the HTTP protocol, for

3   the activated mapped key, wherein the request includes the URL associated with the

4   activated mapped key and the unique identification code.

1   9. The method of claim 8, further comprising:

2   sending the HTTP request to a server designated by the URL

1   10. The method of claim 8, further comprising:

2   processing the request local to the client system.

1   11. The method of claim 8, wherein the HTTP request further includes an

2   identifier for the activated mapped key.

1   12. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   receiving a first indication to disable the set of mapped keys; and

3   disabling the set of mapped keys in response to the received first

4   indication.

1   13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

2   receiving a second indication to enable the set of mapped keys; and

3   enabling the set of mapped keys in response to the received second

4   indication.

1   14. The method of claim 1, wherein the set of mapped keys are selected

2   from a set of functional (F) keys available on a computer keyboard.

1   15. A method for mapping a set of keys on a user device to a set of

2   Uniform Resource Locators (URLs), the method comprising:

3   associating each key in a first set of keys with a respective set of one or

4   more URLs; and

5   for each of one or more keys in the first set,

6   receiving a selection for a particular URL in the associated set of

7   URLs, and

8   mapping the key to the selected URL.

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1   16. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

2   associating each key in a second set of one or more keys with a respective

3 URL.

1   17. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

2   associating each key in a third set of one or more keys with an unrestricted

3 URL; and

4   for each of one or more keys in the third set,

5   receiving an entry for a particular URL, and

6   mapping the key to the entered URL.

1   18. The method of claim 15, further comprising:

2   storing the URL for each mapped key to a storage unit.

1   19. A method for processing HTTP requests at a first server, the method

2 comprising:

3   receiving an HTTP request from a user device, wherein the request

4 includes a unique identification code and an identifier for a particular key activated to

5 generate the request;

6   determining a multimedia resource location for the activated key; and

7   directing the received request to the determined resource address for the

8 activated key.

1   20. The method of claim 19, wherein the resource address for the

2 activated key is determined based on the unique identification code and the identity of the

3 activated key.

1   21. The method of claim 19, wherein the resource address for the

2 activated key is retrieved from a database used to store resource addresses for unique

3 identification codes and keys.

1   22. The method of claim 19, further comprising:

2   collecting demographic information associated with the received request.

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1   23. The method of claim 22, wherein the demographic information is

2   encapsulated within the unique identification code.

1   24. The method of claim 22, further comprising:

2   collecting descriptive information associated with the received request.

1   25. The method of claim 24, wherein the descriptive information includes

2   a particular time of day the request was received.

1   26. The method of claim 19, further comprising:

2   initiating a setup program if the unique identification code or identity of

3   the activated key is unrecognized.

1   27. The method of claim 19, further comprising:

2   determining a load at the first server; and

3   directing the received request to a second server if the load at the server is

4   above a particular threshold.

1   28. The method of claim 19, further comprising:

2   identifying the number of servers available to process requests;

3   computing a code for the received request; and

4   directing the received request to one of the available servers based on the

5   computed code.

1   29. The method of claim 28, wherein the computed code is based on at

2   least a portion of the unique identification code included in the received request.

1   30. A computer program product for directing an application to a Uniform

2   Resource Locator (URL), comprising:

3   code that maps a set of keys on a user device to a set of URLs;

4   code that detects activation of a particular mapped key;

5   code that retrieves a URL associated with the activated mapped key;

6   code that directs the application to the retrieved URL, wherein the

7 application is a Web browser or a multimedia player; and

8   a data storage medium operative to store the codes.

1   31. A server operative to process HTTP requests and comprising:

2   a data storage medium configured to store a handler module operable to

3   receive a request from a user device, wherein the request includes a

4 unique identification code and an identifier for a particular key activated to

5 generate the request,

6   determine a multimedia resource address for the activated key, and

7   direct the received request to the determined resource address for

8 the activated key; and

9   at least one processor operatively coupled to the data storage medium and

10 configured to execute the one or more modules stored therein.

1   32. The computer program of claim 31, wherein the data storage medium

2 is further configured to store a data mining module operable to

3   collect demographic information associated with the received request,

4   collect information relating to a particular time of day the request was

5 received, and

6   collect an identity of the particular key activated to generate the received

7 request.

1   33. The computer program of claim 31, wherein the data storage medium

2 is further configured to store a load balancing module operable to

3   identify the number of servers available to process requests,

4   compute a code for the received request, and

5   direct the received request to one of the available servers based on the

6 computed code.